

To: Executive Management Team

White Paper: Multiple Source Assessments and 360 degree Evaluations

We will discuss this topic at the next Management Team meeting.

C.R.S. 24-50-104 (c) (IV) states, “The state personnel director shall encourage state departments and institutions of higher education to implement performance evaluations of employees that are as objective as possible and that, as soon as possible and wherever feasible, include an assessment from multiple sources of each employee’s performance. Such sources shall include, where applicable, the employee’s self-assessment, the employee’s superiors, subordinates, peers, and any other applicable sources of an employee’s performance.”

The statute uses the words “multiple source assessment” although the description could apply to a 360 degree evaluation. The difference is a matter of how many different evaluators are used. In a 360 degree Evaluation the evaluators represent all those who use the products or services produced by the evaluated employee. Despite the encouragement of the Legislature, most management guru’s counsel that 360 degree Evaluations should only be used for purposes of career development. The experience of the Auraria Campus is a good indicator of how these assessments can be successful and how they can backfire.

Cynthia Hier, the Director of Human Resources for the Auraria Campus, relates that several years ago an attempt was made to use 360 degree assessments as a tool for professional development. The campus hired “Strategic Plans, Inc” to conduct a “climate survey” among their top level managers and directors. The technique used was a multiple source assessment because subordinate employees were not interviewed. The survey revealed that communications problems posed the biggest obstacles to managerial improvement. Follow-up surveys were conducted in-house and were more detailed. In the third year of the project line employees were added. The evaluations were conducted with strict confidentiality and restricted to professional development. They did not play any role in employee evaluations. Nevertheless, a certain amount of mistrust crept into the program. Employees began to enter into collusion with one another to improve “ratings.” Personality clashes were cited as reasons for low ratings. Employees liked being able to rate their supervisors but didn’t trust the ratings on themselves. Issues began to be raised over who was involved in the ratings and demands to select who did the ratings caused the project to break down. It was stopped after four years.

Attempts to do multiple source assessments by offices in the Department of Labor and Employment have not been successful. The major problem cited by those offices contacted was the large amount of time required to collect and process the evaluations. It isn’t as simple as sending out forms, getting them back

and collating the data. Other offices frequently fail to return the evaluation forms. If a sufficient number of evaluations are not received the overall evaluation lacks credibility. It would be ideal if a third party conducted the evaluation but lack of funding makes that impossible. We are continuing to gather more information as we learn of other offices who have tried multiple source assessments for PPS evaluations or as a tool for professional development. If you have some experiences you would be willing to share, please contact Bob Cropp.

Taking our experience and the experience of Auraria campus into consideration, it does not appear that multiple source assessments are practical or cost effective.

The following article was taken from the recruiting website company, "Monster.com"

360-Degree Evaluations

by [Ian Christie](#)

Blaze Your Own Career Expert

To grow personally and professionally, we need an accurate picture of our strengths and weaknesses. But how well do any of us know ourselves? That's when a well-implemented 360-degree evaluation can be constructive.

In a "360," four to eight individuals who work with you give you feedback on your job performance. The group will typically include your boss and a selection of peers, subordinates and, sometimes, customers.

Organizations use these popular, though often controversial, feedback programs to improve employee performance. The controversy surrounds the purpose of the programs and the inconsistent way they can be conducted. When done right, a 360 can be a useful career-development tool. Done wrong -- or for the wrong reason -- a 360 may cause lasting fear and anxiety among employees and create an atmosphere of distrust in the organization.

What to Watch For

Not all 360s are created equal. How you respond to your 360 and how you evaluate others could well depend on the following:

- **Purpose:** The 360 should be implemented as a performance-improvement and career-development tool only. For instance, data gathered in a 360 conducted as part of an annual salary review or in any other way that's not developmental can be used against you, such as to support a termination. If you find yourself in this situation, you and your colleagues will likely rate each other less constructively.
- **Anonymity:** Comments in your 360 should be anonymous. If they're not, the raters may not have felt free to say what they wanted. On the other hand, if you're giving feedback, you will need to balance being constructive with caution. Remember, you still have to work with these people tomorrow.
- **Confidentiality:** Data gathered in your 360 should be shared between you and the one person in the organization charged with helping you create a developmental plan. Without confidentiality, evaluators may provide less-genuine feedback and those being evaluated may not take the process as seriously. Depending on where you work, you may be able to request confidentiality.

- **Follow-up:** A well-implemented 360 program will assign a trained 360 coach to help you understand your feedback and develop an action plan based on it. This is a wonderful opportunity, so take advantage of it. If this support is not available, ask your manager to help you work out a plan. Without organized, constructive follow-up, the process can leave a trail of bad feelings and cynicism as well as undermine your confidence.

How to Benefit from a 360-Degree Evaluation

If your turn in the 360-degree hot seat is coming up, how can you get the most from the experience? Here are some tips:

- **Ask for Honest Feedback:** If you are serious about your development and the 360 has been implemented properly, consider asking trusted team members to be as honest as possible when they evaluate you. Reassure them that you won't hold anything they say against them.
- **Don't Negate the Negative:** The best feedback honestly highlights what you are doing well and what you need to improve. In this context, negative feedback is a good thing. Without it, the process is useless. Therefore, don't be defensive.
- **Determine the Validity of the Information:** While you should be open to negative feedback, do a gut check on the comments that don't feel right to you. Because some evaluators may have less working knowledge of you than others, their comments may reflect an inaccurate picture. Others may use the 360 to push their own agendas. Consider asking a trusted colleague if he thinks the feedback you're questioning is accurate.
- **Take Action:** The data you'll receive will fall into three categories: things you can change, things you can't change and things you could change with difficulty and at personal cost. Don't worry as much about the things that are only marginally related to your career. Focus instead on those that may [kill your chances for advancement](#) if you don't improve them. Invest the time to develop a realistic action plan to address those areas that are essential to your career success.

With a clearer picture of your performance that a well-implemented 360 delivers, you are in a stronger position to take action on your career development.

[Ian Christie founded [BoldCareer.com](http://www.BoldCareer.com) to help individuals build bold, fulfilling careers and help organizations attract, develop and retain talent. A career coach, consultant, three-time entrepreneur, former senior director at Monster and former retained executive search consultant, Ian Christie is an expert in the fields of careers and recruitment. He believes career management is a central theme to both personal and organizational effectiveness. BoldCareer.com offers career services to companies and individuals as well as free career resources.]

Here are some hyperlinks to other articles that we feel contribute to better understanding of this technique:

Does 360 Feedback Negatively Affect Company Performance?

http://www.shrm.org/hrmagazine/articles/0602/0602pfau_kay.asp

Is your Company Ready for 360 Degree Feedback?

http://www.shrm.org/hrresources/whitepapers_published/CMS_000101.asp